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Message Text

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53
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 /058 W
---------- 042397
R 081200Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2766

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 4725

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS SHUM UY
SUBJECT: ARREST OF URUGUAYAN CITIZEN RAUL ANTONIO LEGNANI DE VECCHI

REF: STATE 293650

1. UNOFFICIAL SOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE EMBASSY CONFIRM THAT LEGNANI WAS ARRESTED. THEY BELIEVE HE REMAINS IN CUSTODY, AND IS HELD AT THE MILITARY HOSPITAL, APPARENTLY BECAUSE HE HAD PREVIOUSLY SUFFERED A STROKE AND IS PARTLY PARALYZED. ACCORDING TO THESE SOURCES HE WAS ARRESTED DURING A ROUND-UP OF AN UNKNOWN TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS IN THE TOWNS OF LA PAZ, LAS PIEDRAS AND CANELONES (ALL NEAR MONTE-VIDEO) IN SEPTEMBER. LEGNANI'S WIFE IS SAID TO HAVE GONE TO MEXICO ONLY DAYS BEFORE HIS ARREST, AND HIS DAUGHTER-IN-LAW WAS ALSO ARRESTED BUT THEN RELEASED.

2. EMBASSY SOURCES TELL US THAT THE ARRESTED PERSONS WERE SUPPORTERS OF THE FRENTE AMPLIO (A GROUPING OF LEFT WING POLITICAL PARTIES FORMED FOR THE 1971 ELECTIONS) AND THAT THEY ARE MOSTLY MIDDLE CLASS, INCLUDING SOME PROFESSIONALS. THEY REPORTEDLY HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH ASSISTING A SUBVERSIVE ORGANIZATION, A CHARGE ARISING OUT OF THEIR ALLEGEDLY RESPONDING TO SOLICITATIONS FOR FUNDS FOR THE COMMUNIST PARTY (WHICH IS OUTLAWED). THEY WERE REPORTEDLY HELD ORIGINALLY IN VERY UNCOMFORTABLE CONDITIONS IN DISMOUNTED RAILROAD BOX CARS. SINCE THEN, AFTER SIGNING STATEMENTS THAT THEY WERE NOT MISTREATED, THEY WERE MOVED TO THE POLICE STATION IN CANELONES, WHERE THEIR TREATMENT IS PROBABLY BETTER. ONE SOURCE SAID THAT 40 PERSONS FROM THE ORIGINAL GROUP ARRESTED WERE BEING HELD AS OF DECEMBER 1 UNDER CONDITIONS WHERE THEY CAN AND DO RECEIVE
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VISITORS AND TALK FREELY.

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3. WHILE THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THESE ARRESTS ARE NOW WELL KNOWN IN CANELONES DUE TO THE LINES OF RELATIVES AND FRIENDS ASSEMBLING FOR VISITS, THEY HAVE NOT BEEN MATTERS OF DISCUSSION OR RUMORS HERE. OUR UNOFFICIAL INQUIRIES ON LEGNANI'S REPORTED ARREST LED TO THE FIRST WE HAD HEARD OF THIS OVERALL INCIDENT. AND EVEN THOUGH THE FAMILY IS PROMINENT HERE, AND INCLUDES FORMER MINISTER OF INTERIOR, MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AUGUSTO LEGNANI, OUR INQUIRIES WERE THE FIRST NEWS SOME MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY HAD OF THE ARREST OF DR. LEGNANI.
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